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**Health Services**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Los Angeles County  
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Director and Chief Medical Officer

John R. Cochran, III  
Chief Deputy Director

Robert G. Splawn, MD  
Senior Medical Director

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February 2, 2007

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bruce A. Chernof, M.D.  
Director and Chief Medical Officer

SUBJECT: **"NO DRUGS DOWN THE DRAIN" PROGRAM**

This is in response to the October 31, 2006 Board Motion instructing the Director of Health Services, in collaboration with the Directors of Public Health and Public Works, County Counsel, and Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts to pursue an integrated County-wide unused or expired drug collection and disposal program with a broad educational component. The Motion seeks to expand the "No Drugs Down the Drain" program, and provide County residents with additional drop-off sites, including but not limited to our own County clinics and pharmacies, expanding the County-wide Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Management Program, and encouraging participation by commercial pharmacy chains, such as Rite-Aid and CVS Pharmacies.

Pursuant to the Board's motion, the Departments of Health Services, Public Health, Public Works, County Counsel, and Chief Administrative Officer established a work team to review current County processes, and identify opportunities to expand current drug disposal programs. It was found that a drug disposal program currently exists. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, in partnership with the County Sanitation Districts, operates the County-wide Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Management Program. The HHW Management Program consists of an educational effort and a collection component. Included in the ongoing educational component are newspaper advertisements, community fliers (posted in community libraries, schools, groups, and stores) and an active website ([www.888cleanla.com](http://www.888cleanla.com)). The collection component includes one permanent collection site (in Palmdale) and an average 55 mobile HHW collection events per year, held in different locations throughout the County. The Department of Public Works will be issuing a Request for Proposal to enhance its outreach for the HHW Management Program, which will also address the management of unused pharmaceutical waste. Additionally, the City of Los Angeles operates six permanent S.A.F.E. (Solvents/Automotive/Flammables/Electronics) Centers which also accept pharmaceuticals. These S.A.F.E. Centers are open to all Los Angeles County residents.

The "No Drugs Down the Drain" program was initiated in March 2006 by the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, City of Los Angeles and Orange County Sanitation District. It is a public outreach program intended to alert Southern California residents to the issues associated with flushing unused, unwanted and expired medication through the sewage system. Bilingual

information cards were distributed to over 1900 community pharmacies during the March 2006 campaign, and a detailed website ([www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org](http://www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org)) was created to provide the public with alternative, environmentally-appropriate disposal options. This website also provides information regarding HHW collection events, and tips on how to safely dispose of medications in household trash containers. The Sanitation Districts indicate that they intend to partner with the same public agencies again this year to repeat the "No Drugs Down the Drain" program. The 2007 program will once again distribute the bilingual information cards to community pharmacies located in each agency's respective service area, and will advertise in local newspapers, community letters and periodicals.

Licensed healthcare facilities are held to higher regulatory standards regarding disposal of pharmaceutical waste through two regulatory standards involved in regulating the disposal of pharmaceutical waste, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency regulations for controlled substances, and the California Medical Waste Management Act for non-controlled substances. In addition, hazardous pharmaceutical disposal (chemotherapy and specific outpatient medications such as nicotine, nitroglycerin and warfarin) must be disposed of following regulations set by the Environmental Protection Agency's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). In fact, pharmaceuticals include a wide range of substances, including oral solids, liquids, injectable, flammable, and even hazardous materials. Given the stricter regulatory disposal standards for healthcare facilities, combined with safety exposure concerns for existing clinic/pharmacy patients and County personnel, the use of DHS/DPH clinics and pharmacies is not recommended as a disposal site for unwanted pharmaceuticals.

In our initial discussions regarding an integrated County-wide unused or expired drug collection program, the County work team recommends enhancing the existing Department of Public Works and Los Angeles County Sanitation District websites to incorporate expanded information and educational materials relating to the appropriate disposal of unused pharmaceuticals. In addition, a link to the HHW collection website and the "No Drugs Down the Drain" website, featuring detailed information on the appropriate method of disposal of unused pharmaceuticals, will be provided to visitors to the Departments of Health Services and Public Health websites. Finally, the two commercial pharmacy chains contacted declined participation at this time in providing drop-off sites within their stores due to their concerns regarding health and liability.

The County work team also recommends pursuing the expansion of the existing HHW Management Program to increase educational outreach and the number of HHW permanent centers and mobile collection events. Also under consideration are expanded educational efforts involving circulation of promotional material throughout the various DPH clinics and DHS pharmacies, as well as the use of the media to increase outreach. Other organizations that have been proposed as potential partners in community outreach/education include local environmental/watershed groups, senior organizations, the medical community and associated professional organizations. Also recommended is the pursuit of potential partnerships with receptive commercial or law enforcement entities, which may provide additional drop-off sites throughout the County. Since this issue is of concern to all residents within California, efforts will be made to evaluate other programs within the State, particularly in counties with similar demographics, and determine if any of their programs may be adapted to Los Angeles County.

DHS, in collaboration with the established County work team, will continue to work with the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, and provide your Board, no later than August 1, 2007, with an updated status of our efforts to enhance our existing unused or expired drug collection and disposal program. At that time, DHS and the other County departments will provide further

details regarding any recommended pilot programs, increased collection sites and advertising campaigns, and any associated costs and funding sources.

BAC: ag  
611:001

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
Director, Department of Public Health  
Director, Department of Public Works  
Director, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts



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December 7, 2007

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bruce A. Chernof, M.D.  
Director and Chief Medical Officer

SUBJECT: **UPDATE: "NO DRUGS DOWN THE DRAIN"  
PROGRAM**

On October 31, 2006 the Board instructed the Director of Health Services, in collaboration with the Directors of Public Health and Public Works, County Counsel and the Chief Administrative Officer, to work with the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts to pursue an integrated County-wide unused or expired drug collection and disposal program with a broad educational component. An initial report of the committee's work was submitted to the Board on February 2, 2007. This report provides the final update on the County work team's joint efforts to enhance the County's existing unused or expired drug collection and disposal program, as directed by your Board. The following is a summary of the multi-departmental work team's actions and recommendations to expand the program.

During the last several months, the County work team has incorporated the "No Drugs Down the Drain" (NDDTD) message into its many outreach programs. In addition, informational brochures and cards were developed and distributed at County-wide pharmacies, cities, community events, community centers, Household Hazardous Waste (HHW/E-Waste) collection events, and various permanent collection centers. Public awareness messages were delivered through information cards, radio announcements, television interviews, newspapers, community events, and websites.

Community Awareness:

- The Department of Public Works (DPW) designed, printed, and distributed bilingual (English and Spanish) informational brochures and flyers that incorporated the NDDTD messages reaching over 26,000 households in the unincorporated county areas.
- NDDTD informational cards were distributed by the DPW to 3,500 participants at the Antelope Valley Environmental Collection Center and to 40,000 participants at the 33 mobile HHWE-Waste collection events.
- DPW designed, printed, distributed 30,000 bilingual informational cards and displayed two posters at various community events.

- DPW provided information on the NDDTD during interviews with KTLA Morning News on March 16, 2007; KVEA Spanish Morning News on April 23, 2007; and KFI radio station on March 1, 2007.
- County Sanitation Districts (CSD) presented the NDDTD campaign to the Southern California Alliance of POTW's (SCAP) Water Issues Committee on April 18, 2007.
- CSD provided NDDTD artwork and/or informational cards to various cities and agencies including the Cities of San Clemente, Santa Monica, Cerritos, and Camarillo. Information was also provided to the Physicians for Social Responsibility, California Pharmacists Association and the Cerritos Senior Center.
- CSD distributed informational cards to the City of Los Angeles departments including the Department of Aging, Recreation and Parks, and Library. In addition, information cards were distributed during open house, neighborhood council events and public outreach events.
- On April 22, 2007, CSD included the NDDTD messages in the Daily News' advertising supplement for the Earth Day issue.
- Postcards were distributed to 742 retail pharmacies by CSD in the Sanitation Districts' service area during the third week of April 2007, for distribution to pharmacy customers as prescriptions were filled. All outpatient pharmacies within the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS) participated in the 2007 NDDTD program, distributing educational postcards to DHS patients.

#### Website Outreach

- The County of Los Angeles was added to [www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org](http://www.nodrugsdownthedrain.org) website as a sponsor.
- An educational notice regarding appropriate drug disposal was added to the DHS website. This notice included a link to the NDDTD website.
- DPW added a link from their departmental website to the NDDTD website
- DPW expanded the [www.888CleanLA.com](http://www.888CleanLA.com) website to include a NDDTD webpage.
- DPH added a link from their departmental website to the NDDTD website.

#### Community Events

The County work team participated in over 30 community events and distributed NDDTD information and outreach materials to County residents. Some of the major events in each of the Supervisorial Districts (SD) included:

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| • Lennox Family Festival, SD - 2                     | July 14, 2007     |
| • Environmental Career Day, Baldwin Park, SD - 1     | June 1, 2007      |
| • LAC+USC Medical Center, Health Fair, SD - 1        | May 4, 2007       |
| • Eco-Smart Event, Alhambra, SD - 5                  | April 25, 2007    |
| • Eco-Fabulous Event, Santa Monica, SD - 3           | April 24, 2007    |
| • Earth Day, Universal City, SD - 3                  | April 23, 2007    |
| • K-Earth 101 FM Earth Day Expo, Los Angeles, SD - 3 | April 21-22, 2007 |

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| • Earth Day, Santa Monica Promenade, SD - 3           | April 14, 2007 |
| • CSD Earth Day Fair, Whittier, SD - 1                | April 14, 2007 |
| • Green Fest 2007, Monterey Park, SD - 1              | April 14, 2007 |
| • Alcoa Health and Safety Fair, Torrance, SD - 4      | April 13, 2007 |
| • Los Angeles County Vendor Fair, Los Angeles, SD - 3 | April 11, 2007 |
| • Spring Health Fair and Egg Hunt, La Puente, SD - 1  | April 7, 2007  |

#### County Employee Awareness

- DHS included an educational article in the May 2007 issue of *DHS Connections*, an employee newsletter, on appropriate drug disposal.
- NDDTD messages describing the appropriate method of disposal of unwanted medications will be forwarded to the Auditor/Controller for inclusion in Los Angeles County employee payroll stubs.
- NDDTD educational awareness messages will be forwarded to the Internal Services Department, with a request that this be distributed to all Los Angeles County employees via email.
- CSD included a NDDTD message in the *Daily News*' advertising supplement for the You & the Environment in October 2007 and on the 2008 Earth Day Awareness publication.
- CSD conducted a survey on the NDDTD campaign, intended for community pharmacies, in September 2007.

#### New State Legislation

On October 12, 2007, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Senate Bill (SB) 966 into law. SB 966, which becomes effective January 1, 2008, requires the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) to identify and develop model programs for the safe disposal of pharmaceutical waste and to report to the Legislature by December 1, 2010 on the effectiveness and accessibility of the programs.

In developing these model programs, CIWMB is required to consult with local, State, and federal agencies, including the Department of Toxic Substances Control, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the California State Board of Pharmacy to establish model disposal programs. Furthermore, SB 966 establishes minimum requirements for the pharmaceutical waste disposal model programs that include safety, oversight, diversion prevention, ease of use for consumers, and authorizes the CIWMB to develop related emergency regulations, as necessary. Finally, SB 966 increases, from \$5 million to \$6 million, the amount of annual funding CIWMB provides to cities, counties, and other local agencies for solid waste management and pharmaceutical waste disposal programs.

In the event Los Angeles County is selected to assist CWIMB in the development of a pharmaceutical waste program, the County's existing NDDTD program will be enhanced and the program's goals and objectives will be further supported by the funding resources made available by CWIMB.

### Recommendations

To enhance and expand the NDDTD program, the County work team recommends the development of additional permanent collection centers for safe disposal of unused or expired medications. DPW is investigating possible mechanisms to fund the development of additional permanent HHW/E-Waste collection centers, and is currently exploring potential partnerships with the State (CIWMB funding), cities and other stakeholders for the development of these centers

The County work team also recommends enhancing the current community awareness outreach by implementing an integrated public education component to include a mass media campaign to further reach County residents and pharmacy customers. The integrated public education campaign would be effective in educating a large number of Los Angeles County residents about the proper use and disposal of unused or expired medications. The initial estimate for this media campaign is approximately \$2 million; funding has not yet been identified. The affected Departments will continue to look for funds for this purpose.

### Summary

The multi-departmental County work team has been effective at stimulating various departmental actions relating to community awareness and education, as described in the above sections. The affected Departments will continue to review their on-going programs to seek opportunities to enhance these activities.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.

BAC:ag  
611:001

c: Chief Executive Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
Director, Department of Public Health  
Director, Department of Public Works  
Director, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts